Attorney Seeks to Exonerate Nixon

By Jack Anderson

The latest White House cover-up is being directed behind the scenes by a distinguished Philadelphia attorney, Kenneth Gemmill, who has been working without pay on President Nixon's tangled finances.

He is now trying to disassociate the President from an investigation into possible fraud in the preparation of his tax returns. Two Nixon associates, former White House aide Edward Morgan and tax attorney Frank DeMarco, have admitted behind closed doors that they backdated the deed, which gave him a $576,000 tax deduction.

They explained to congressional investigators, with two Internal Revenue agents sitting in, that the backdating merely formalized the President's wish to donate his vice presidential papers to the governmnt. The President had intended to do this before the July 25, 1969, deadline for taking tax deductions, they alleged.

Tax agents are now investigating whether the backdated deed constituted deliberate fraud and tax evasion. Since the President signed his own returns, he is legally responsible for their contents.

But Gemmill has been maneuvering frantically to exonerate the President. We have spoken to witnesses in the case, who asked not to be identified but who said Gemmill has been in touch with them. Gemmill rehearsed with them dates and details most favorable to the President, these witnesses told us.

Last June, the same Gemmill arranged for the return of the $100,000 in cash that billionaire Howard Hughes had intended for Nixon. The money was delivered to the President's friend, C. G. Bebe Rebozo, who claimed he kept it in a safety deposit box for thee years without telling the President about it.

The money was returned, according to sworn testimony, not by Rebozo but by an aide of another presidential friend, millionaire Robert Abplanalp. In making the arrangements, Gemmill is quoted in the sworn testimony as telling Hughes' representative: "I do not care what you do with the money after I deliver it to you, but I want it delivered in currency."

Footnote: We placed several calls to Gemmill, whose secretary said he had received our messages. He declined, however, to return the calls.

Sunny Side—It seems hardly possible that only a year ago President Nixon was celebrating his triumphent inaugural and the end of the American involvement in Vietnam. He had both the mandate and the favorable circumstances to overcome problems that had been building up during a decade of fruitless, divisive war.

Then it burst upon us that President Nixon's great electoral victory was tainted by fraud and crime. Each day, month after month, brought news of yet another moral calamity. The crimes that were uncovered were shown not as the isolated acts of a couple of individuals but as the deliberate modus operandi of the Nixon presidency.

Beyond Washington, corruption seemed to spread pervasively. Police scandals erupted in a dozen major cities. A string of corporation presidents pleaded guilty to making illegal political contributions. National labor leaders continued in their perennial predicaments—trying to get out of jail or resisting being thrown in.

Sports fans were crestfallen to learn that many of their dauntless heroes couldn't take the field without being hopped up on drugs. Even the national Soap Box Derby, the quintessentially American home-made car competition among twelve-year-olds, was won by a car that urned out to have been illegally wired up.

Thus deprived of trust in man or boy, a people already feeling twinges of self-doubt were now stripped, one by one, of some of their most cherished illusions.

Yet the people have not panicked, our institutions have not collapsed, and the wheels of democracy are still grinding. Most government officials are still men of integrity and honor.

Take, for instance, Russell Peterson, who was defeated for reelection as governor of Delaware in 1972. He recently took over the President's Council on Environmental Quality, after amassing an impressive record of fighting wetland development on the Delaware coast.

Russell Train, a conservationist with impeccable credentials, assumed the reins at the Environmental Protection Agency right in the middle of the Watergate mess. He has since stood his ground against the White House on several environmental issues.

Sidney Jones became the Commerce Department's chief economist last July and waded into the administration's economic problems. He was asked why he took such a job in the midst of a major crisis. His reply: "There's a greater need now for involvement in the affairs of our country."

Last September, the adminisration persuaded Daniel Parker, head of Parker Pen Company, to take charge of the Agency for International Development. Parker impressed Congress with his background and intelligence. Since taking over at AID, he has quietly begun straightening out the problem-plagued agency. As one old-line, foreign-aid bureaucrat told us, with unconcealed exuberance: "The monster has been harnessed."

In what was perhaps the saddest moment of the Watergate hearings last summer, a disenchanted young Nixon aide advised young people to stay out of Washington. A great many talented Americans, thankfully, are not taking his advice.

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